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FALSTAFF
AND
HIS COMPANIONS.

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FALSTAFF

AND

HIS COMPANIONS.

Twenty-one Illustrations in Silhouette,

By PAUL KONEWKA.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY HERMANN KURZ.

TRANSLATED BY PROF. C. C. SHACKFORD.

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CAMBRIDGE :

PRESS OF JOHN WILSON AND SON.

INTRODUCTION.

BY HERMANN KURZ.

IN this youthful squire, who, with proud bearing upon the caparisoned steed, holds aloft his banner, we recognize the brave boy in Henry V., — the page now grown up to be a young soldier, — who is hastening to his post of duty at Agincourt, and to an honorable death. It is a happy thought of the artist to make him the standard-bearer and herald of a company with which he was so honorably associated during life, bearing on his banner the inscription, "Falstaff and his Companions."

And this is perfectly justifiable at the entrance of this unique procession of "Knights of the Round Table," who form, so to speak, a state within the state throughout three historical

dramas, and carry on a supplementary comedy of their own on the arena of martial contests. A similar view to this is expressed by Shakespeare's contemporaries, in the first edition of his works, — the celebrated Folio published by two of his friends and fellow-players, — where Falstaff and his companions, in one of its lists of *dramatis personæ*, so rarely to be met with, are separated from the other characters, and designated as "Irregular Humorists." Even in the lifetime of the poet, these Falstaffians were not only regarded as constituent parts of those dramas, but as having a special and independent sphere of their own. And very naturally, for they are at once perceived to be a significant parody and foil of the leading serious events; and, while these are occurring, there is readily present to our minds an independent and unbroken series of genuine comedy.

This Falstaffiade owes its origin to one of the strangest revivals of unauthentic tradition and distorted history. There existed a traditional story of the national hero, Henry V., that, when

Crown Prince, in order to divert from himself the jealousy of his suspicious father, he had played a part like Brutus, spending his time idly and among loose companions; and that after he had ascended the throne they were banished from his presence. History knows nothing of this; but shows us the Prince in the service of his father, and performing his part as a good soldier, doing his best in slaughter and devastation, like all the other heroes of his time. He had also as a friend in his youth a person seriously disposed, whose very presence repelled all frivolity. This man was Sir John Oldcastle, who is known to us as having afterwards suffered martyrdom as a follower of the reformed doctrine of Wycliffe. The Prince, after he had become king, fell out with him on this account; and Sir John was handed over by the Church to suffer the cruelest death of a heretic.

Fanatical calumny capped this martyrdom by distorting the character of the martyr, and for a century heaping every sort of reproach upon his memory. Tradition thus handed him down, and

made him, in spite of the Reformation, the grand-master of that princely wicked set, — the fat good-for-nothing, the gray-headed sinner and seducer of the young, the boon-companion of the royal son, who lived in the thoughtless people's mouth only as a wild and hare-brained youth. Before Shakespeare he had already been represented under this form by the drama, which, at its start, eagerly laid hold of this most acceptable of all materials, — the jovial-heroic Henry V.

In this form and under this name, the conventional Oldcastle had also been brought upon the boards by Shakespeare; but the Protestant historical consciousness had meanwhile become formed, and would not bear any longer even the maltreatment of the martyr, however unintentional it might be. The poet was obliged to re-christen the character; and in doing so he righted the wrong by a second even greater one, substituting for Oldcastle a famous warrior, Sir John Falstaff, whom already, in a previous play called Henry V., he had misrepresented by following in good faith the unfair account of the chroniclers.

This is the external history of the Falstaff-cycle, and its leading figure.

The material which came to Shakespeare's hand for that earlier drama, which still remains, was of the roughest sort. The fat knight has no trace of wit; hardly of a corporeal form even, must we say, if we did not know that his figure and costume, the hull without a kernel, had become a theatrical tradition. The wild Prince is represented in a grosser, and therefore a more repulsive form: low and coarsely unintellectual, he shares in the robberies of his comrades; carouses with them in the wildest drinking-bouts and nightly street-rows; exults at his father's death, though his repentance is just as abrupt; and promises to make the most shameless of the band Lord Chief Justice, at whose box on the ear the spectators of course are exceedingly tickled.

The old piece was adapted to the taste of an uncultivated public, and held its place through the success of the player Tarlton in the part of the clown. Nothing can show us more clearly

what material had been handed down to Shakespeare than one of the jokes of this famous comic actor. One of the players being absent, Tarlton had taken the part of the Chief Justice besides his own leading character, and he who took the Prince's part played off the bad jest of giving him a sound slap in the face. Tarlton had to make his appearance immediately afterwards as the clown; and came in with his cheek still burning red, amidst universal laughter. He then took the liberty to state what had occurred, and said that he felt himself regularly insulted by this shocking deed, as if he had received the blow in his own person; and this interpolation brought down the house. This darling of the public and of Queen Elizabeth, whose jokes served to relieve the oppressive burden that weighed upon the heads of state dignitaries, was the pattern of that clown about whom Shakespeare freed his mind in Hamlet; of those players who "speak more than is set down for them," and, regarding themselves as the middle point of interest, "set some barren spectators to laugh, though in the mean

time some necessary question of the play be then to be considered."

What use Shakespeare made of the material furnished him is clearly exhibited in his first Falstaffian scenes. We hear the Prince, at his first entrance, talking with Falstaff of their common robber life in a tone such as one footpad ordinarily uses to another; but when it really comes to the thing itself, he joins in merely to play a trick on his fat accomplice, and the stolen money is amply paid back. This is nothing more than a pretty trick of a grand lord, with whose mode of thinking the trade of a thief would badly comport. It is out of regard to the tradition that the Prince talks of purses taken, gallows, etc., and at the same time the tradition is ennobled: it would not do, for one who would not be gainsaid, to call it too strictly to account.

The same view is to be taken of one of the early scenes in which Falstaff appears. When he is lying to the Prince and Pointz, — how he was set upon by two rogues in buckram suits;

how four let drive at him ; how he took all their seven points on his target, and then paid seven of the eleven, — he cannot for a moment really believe, clear-headed as he is, that he can impose upon these two, who are as clear-headed as himself, with this mass of flummery ; and they can as little imagine that he thinks they believe it ; and yet he is mercilessly belabored by them for his lies. We see, therefore, that there existed a tacit understanding among these humorists to exaggerate to each other, and perhaps even to themselves ; and, as soon as we get an inkling of this, we begin to fancy that not only the Prince, but Falstaff also, is somewhat better than his reputation would seem to indicate, and than he himself would put in any claim to be.

There are several other aspects which cannot be mastered in a moment. In Parolles, that embryo of Falstaff, — or rather, perhaps, his blooming, illegitimate child, — in Falstaff himself and his foil Pistol, the poet has endeavored to draw the picture of a class of men, different

as the individual characters may be, whom he in one place calls the rank growth and weeds of the time, — the military swaggerers, who, without rendering any soldierly service, and even with actual cowardice, impose upon the multitude with their military bearing, and for the time even upon their superiors. In Falstaff there is a union of the parasite and the braggart, such as ancient comedy cannot exhibit; a rich compound of base qualities, which are at first only spoken of, and then gradually unfolded before our eyes, until the character in the Second Part of Henry IV., although still preserving its due proportion with the surroundings, sinks anchor-deep below the level of its first appearance. Here we have touches of that low realism, most powerfully drawn indeed, but rarely to be found in Shakespeare, in whose school his rival, Ben Jonson, learned to draw those pictures of life, from which we could now restore a *feuilleton* of London in the year 1600.

There can be no shade of doubt that, in dealing with that side of character in which he has

embodied the typical characteristics of the time, the dramatist has done it with all moral earnestness; but this does not compromise them at all in the view we have taken of them. It may be regarded as a significant trait of the Middle Ages, that Vice, the universal allegorical figure of its semi-ecclesiastical plays, called "Moralities," was a comical one; and, as such, was the favorite of the public. A similar and even more striking transformation belongs to our vicious knight. The secret of this transformation is, that the dramatist has bestowed upon him far too copiously, especially in the earlier scenes, his own mental characteristics, for us ever to really believe in the utter degeneracy of this rich spirit, as we still suppose him to be. Hence it happens that the character loses nothing in respect to dramatic unfolding; but that it is afterwards, as we become acquainted with its worst features, a different one from what we are made acquainted with in the beginning. And so we cannot get rid of the first impression that the witty sinner is calumniated, and calumniates himself. We

cannot in the later Falstaff wholly forget the earlier; especially when we are at intervals only too vividly reminded, as in that grand discourse on sack, of the earlier characteristics. It is only by a nearer view that we are made aware that in Falstaff, as well as in the Prince, there is a slight contradiction. If this can be called a fault, it is the most triumphant one that a poet could possibly commit; for here is a character created, whom the laxest ethics must condemn, whilst he charms the strictest moral censor.

Yes, Parolles is and must continue to be a wretched wight, notwithstanding that Fate graciously suffers him to end well; but Jack Falstaff can never utterly fall from grace. We ask what those about him say of him. The Prince can give him up with difficulty, in spite of all good resolutions, only after his position as king obliges him to be more strict towards himself and towards others. And the Hostess, — who had so many grounds of complaint against him, — what does she say, when he goes to the war? “Well, fare thee well,” she sobs after him; “Fare thee

well: I have known thee these twenty-nine years come peascod-time; but an honest, and truer-hearted man, — Well, fare thee well.” And Bardolph, whom he had so often vexed by his cutting jokes about his nose, even keeping it up when dying, nevertheless whimpers forth: “Would I were with him, wheresome’er he is, either in Heaven or in Hell.” “Nay,” replies Mrs. Quickly, — who knows much better where he is, — “sure, he ’s not in Hell: he ’s in Arthur’s bosom, if ever man went to Arthur’s bosom. ’A made a finer end, and went away an it had been any christom child.”

Even the maiden Queen Bess must have, in a degree, lost her flinty heart for him, if tradition can be credited. Why should she have felt any differently from her loyal people and the poet himself? He still remained gracious to him, and wrought a small miracle by raising him to life again, to the satisfaction of every one; bringing also from the grave, and even from the gallows, his favorite companions, so that Bardolph’s wish had not been made in vain. The old comrades

are brought together again in the royal city of Windsor, where Falstaff encounters some adventures with two merry wives; and our hero has the moral courage, as occasionally before, to make himself out worse than he was in fact, — honest old soul as he is, — for the general sport. He is glad that the arrows glance from the mark, even if he is wounded by them. And therefore his adventures this time do not end so badly as in his first life, when his "sweet, mad wag, Hal, did much harm upon him." There, virtue took its place at the board where vice had come to its foul end; the same virtue which had formerly wandered out "under the moon and seven stars" with vice. But here, at parting, virtue and vice are peacefully joined; and "each one goes home to laugh the sport o'er by a country fire."

Let us then, as far as we can, shut an eye to the dark side of old Jack, and endeavor so much the more to make the best of his bright side; for "the abuses of the time call for improvement." Our artist, Konewka, represents the figures

which were grouped about Falstaff in their individual characters, therein resembling the dramatic critic who illustrates one character after the other separately ; but the artist's task is the more satisfactory one, for he can express by a few casual strokes what the critic fails to convey with his exhaustive analysis.

Walstaff and his
Companions



I.

PRINCE HENRY AND FRANCIS.

FRANCIS. — Anon, anon, sir. — Look down into the Pomegarnet, Ralph.

P. HENRY. — Come hither, Francis.

FRAN. — My Lord.

P. HENRY. — How long hast thou to serve, Francis?

FRAN. — Forsooth, five years, and as much as to —

POINTZ [*within*]. — Francis!

FRAN. — Anon, anon, sir.

P. HENRY. — Five years! by 'r Lady, a long lease for the clinking of pewter. But, Francis, darest thou be so valiant as to play the coward with thy indenture, and to show it a fair pair of heels, and run from it?

FRAN. — O Lord! sir, I'll be sworn upon all the books in England, I could find in my heart —

POINTZ [*within*]. — Francis!

FRAN. — Anon, anon, sir.

K. Henry IV., Part I. Act II. Sc. 4.



I.

Prince Henry and Francis.

II.

FALSTAFF AND PAGE.

FALSTAFF. — Men of all sorts take a pride to gird at me: the brain of this foolish-compounded clay, man, is not able to invent any thing that tends to laughter, more than I invent, or is invented on me: I am not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men. I do here walk before thee like a sow that hath o'erwhelm'd all her litter but one: if the Prince put thee into my service for any other reason than to set me off, why then I have no judgment. Thou whoreson mandrake, thou art fitter to be worn in my cap than to wait at my heels. I was never mann'd with an agate till now: but I will set you neither in gold nor silver, but in vile apparel, and send you back again to your master, for- a jewel, — the juvenal, the Prince your master, whose chin is not yet fledg'd. He may keep his own grace, but he is almost out of mine, I can assure him. — What said Master Dumbleton about the satin for my short cloak and my slops?

K. Henry IV., Part II. Act I. Sc. 2.



II.

Falstaff and Page.

III.

BARDOLPH.

FALSTAFF. — Thou art our admiral, thou bearest the lantern in the poop, — but 'tis in the nose of thee: thou art the Knight of the Burning Lamp. O, thou art a perpetual triumph, an everlasting bonfire-light! Thou hast saved me a thousand marks in links and torches, walking with thee in the night betwixt tavern and tavern: but the sack that thou hast drunk me would have bought me lights as good cheap, at the dearest chandler's in Europe. I have maintain'd that salamander of yours with fire any time this two and thirty years: God reward me for it!

K. Henry IV., Part I. Act III. Sc. 3.



III.

Bardolph.



IV.

SHALLOW AND SILENCE.

SHALLOW. — Jesu! Jesu! the mad days that I have spent! and to see how many of mine old acquaintance are dead!

SILENCE. — We shall all follow, cousin.

SHAL. — Certain, 'tis certain; very sure, very sure; death, as the Psalmist saith, is certain to all; all shall die. — How a good yoke of bullocks at Stamford Fair?

SIL. — Truly, cousin, I was not there.

SHAL. — Death is certain. — Is old Double of your town living yet?

SIL. — Dead, sir.

SHAL. — Jesu! Jesu! Dead! — he drew a good bow; and dead! — he shot a fine shoot: John of Gaunt loved him well, and betted much money on his head. Dead! — How a score of ewes now?

SIL. — Thereafter as they be; a score of good ewes may be worth ten pounds.

SHAL. — And is old Double dead!

K. Henry IV., Part II. Act III. Sc. 2.



IV.

Shallow and Silence.

V.

POINTZ AND DOLL TEARSHEET.

POINTZ. — By this light, I am well spoken on; I can hear it with mine own ears: the worst that they can say of me is, that I am a second brother, and that I am a proper fellow of my hands; and those two things, I confess, I cannot help.

K. Henry IV., Part II. Act II. Sc. 2.

DOLL. — Hang yourself, you muddy conger, hang yourself!

K. Henry IV., Part II. Act II. Sc. 4.

DOLL. — Ah, rogue! i' faith, I love thee. Thou art as valorous as Hector of Troy, worth five of Agamemnon, and ten times better than the Nine Worthies. Ah, villain!

K. Henry IV., Part II. Act II. Sc. 4



V.

Pointz and Doll Tearsheet.

VI.

GADSHILL AND PETO.

GADSHILL. — What talkest thou to me of the hangman? if I hang, I'll make a fat pair of gallows; for, if I hang, old Sir John hangs with me, and thou know'st he's no starveling. Tut! there are other Trojans that thou dream'st not of, the which, for sport sake, are content to do the profession some grace, that would, if matters should be look'd into, for their own credit sake, make all whole.

K. Henry IV., Part I. Act II. Sc. 1.

PETO. — How many be there of them?

GADSHILL. — Some eight or ten.

K. Henry IV., Part I. Act II. Sc. 2.



VI.

Gadshill and Peto.

VII.

SNARE AND FANG.

FANG. — Sirrah, where 's Snare?

SNARE. — Here, here.

FANG. — Snare, we must arrest Sir John Falstaff.

SNARE. — It may chance cost some of us our lives; for he will stab.

FANG. — If I can close with him, I care not for his thrust.

K. Henry IV., Part II. Act II. Sc. 1.



VII.

Snare and Fang.

VIII.

HOSTESS QUICKLY AND PISTOL.

MRS. QUICKLY. — Pr'ythee, honey-sweet husband, let me bring thee to Staines.

PISTOL. — No; for my manly heart doth yearn.

Come, let's away. — My love,

Look to my chattels and my movables :

Let senses rule ; the word is, "Pitch and pay ;"

Trust none ;

For oaths are straws, men's faiths are wafer-cakes,

And Hold-fast is the only dog, my duck.

Let housewifery appear ; keep close, I thee command.

MRS. QUICKLY. — Farewell ; adieu.

K. Henry V., Act II. Sc. 3.



VIII.

Hostess Quickly and Pistol.

IX.

MISTRESS FORD AND MISTRESS PAGE.

MRS. FORD. — What's the matter? how
now!

MRS. PAGE. — O Mistress Ford! what have you done? You're sham'd, you're overthrown, you're undone for ever.

MRS. FORD. — What's the matter, good Mistress Page?

MRS. PAGE. — O well-a-day, Mrs. Ford! having an honest man to your husband, to give him such cause of suspicion!

MRS. FORD. — What cause of suspicion?

MRS. PAGE. — What cause of suspicion? — Out upon you! how am I mistook in you!

MRS. FORD. — Why, alas! what's the matter?

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act III. Sc. 3.



IX.

Mistress Ford and Mistress Page.

X.

NYM.

NYM. — I say little; but when time shall serve, there shall be smites; — but that shall be as it may. I dare not fight; but I will wink, and hold out mine iron. It is a simple one: but what though? it will toast cheese; and it will endure cold as another man's sword will; and there 's an end.

K. Henry V., Act II. Sc. 1.



X.

Д y m.

XI.

MR. FORD AND MR. PAGE.

PAGE. — How now, Master Ford?

FORD. — You heard what this knave told me, did you not?

PAGE. — Yes; and you heard what the other told me.

FORD. — Do you think there is truth in them?

PAGE. — Hang 'em, slaves; I do not think the knight would offer it. But these that accuse him, in his intent towards our wives, are a yoke of his discarded men; very rogues, now they be out of service.

FORD. — Were they his men?

PAGE. — Marry, were they.

FORD. — I like it never the better for that.

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act II. Sc. 1.



XI.

Mr. Ford and Mr. Page.

XII.

DR. CAIUS.

I HAVE heard, the Frenchman hath good skill in his rapier.”

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act II. Sc. 1.

CAIUS. — By gar, he has save his soul, dat he is no come: he has pray his Pible vell, dat he is no come. By gar, he is dead already, if he be come. By gar, de herring is no dead, so as I vill kill him.

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act II. Sc. 3.



XII.

Dr. Caius.

XIII.

MISTRESS PAGE AND ROBIN.

MRS. PAGE. — Nay, keep your way, little gallant: you were wont to be a follower, but now you are a leader. Whether had you rather, lead mine eyes, or eye your master's heels?

ROBIN. — I had rather, forsooth, go before you like a man, than follow him like a dwarf.

MRS. PAGE. — O! you are a flattering boy: now, I see, you'll be a courtier.

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act III. Sc. 2.



XIII.

Mistress Page and Robin.

XIV.

FALSTAFF AND MRS. FORD.

FALSTAFF. — “*Have I caught*” thee, “*my heavenly jewel?*” Why, now let me die, for I have liv’d long enough: this is the period of my ambition. O this blessed hour!

MRS. FORD. — O, sweet Sir John!

FALSTAFF. — Mistress Ford, I cannot cog, I cannot prate, Mistress Ford. Now shall I sin in my wish: I would thy husband were dead, I’ll speak it before the best lord, I would make thee my lady.

MRS. FORD. — I your lady, Sir John! alas, I should be a pitiful lady.

FALSTAFF. — Let the Court of France show me such another. I see how thine eye would emulate the diamond: thou hast the right arched beauty of the brow, that becomes the ship-tire, the tire-valiant, or any tire of Venetian admittance.

MRS. FORD. — A plain kerchief, Sir John: my brows become nothing else; nor that well neither.

FALSTAFF. — By the Lord, thou art a tyrant to say so.

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act III. Sc. 3.



XIV.

Falstaff and Mistress Ford.

XV.

SIR HUGH EVANS AND PISTOL.

PISTOL. — He hears with ears.

SIR HUGH. — The tevil and his tam !
what phrase is this? “He hears with ear?”
Why, it is affectations.

PISTOL. — Ha, thou mountain-foreigner ! — Sir
John and master mine,
I combat challenge of this latten bilbo :
Word of denial in thy labras here ;
Word of denial : froth and scum, thou liest !

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act I. Sc. 1.



XV.

Sir Hugh Evans and Pistol.

XVI.

ROBIN AND GREYHOUND.

“WHY, this boy will carry a letter twenty miles, as easy as a cannon will shoot point-blank twelve score.”

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act III. Sc. 2.



XVI.

Robin and Greyhound.

XVII.

BARDOLPH AND HOST OF GARTER INN.

HOST. — I will entertain Bardolph; he shall draw, he shall tap: said I well, bully Hector?

FALSTAFF. — Do so, good mine Host.

HOST. — I have spoke; let him follow. — Let me see thee froth, and lime. I am at a word; follow.

BARDOLPH. — It is a life that I have desir'd; I will thrive. [*Exit Bard.*]

PISTOL. — O base Hungarian wight! wilt thou the spigot wield?

NYM. — He was gotten in drink: is not the humor conceited?

FALSTAFF. — I am glad I am so acquit of this tinder-box.

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act I. Sc. 3.



XVII.

Bardolph and Host of Garter Inn.

XVIII.

MASTER SLENDER AND ANNE PAGE.

ANNE. — Now, Master Slender.

SLENDER. — Now, good Mistress Anne.

ANNE. — What is your will?

SLENDER. — My will? God's heartlings! that's a pretty jest, indeed! I ne'er made my will yet, I thank Heaven; I am not such a sickly creature, I give Heaven praise.

ANNE. — I mean, Master Slender, what would you with me?

SLENDER. — Truly, for mine own part, I would little or nothing with you. Your father, and my uncle, have made motions: if it be my luck, so; if not, happy man be his dole! They can tell you how things go, better than I can.

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act III. Sc. 4.



XVIII.

Master Slender and Anne Page.

XIX.

FENTON AND MISTRESS QUICKLY.

FENTON. — What news? how does pretty Mistress Anne?

QUICKLY. — In truth, sir, and she is pretty, and honest, and gentle; and one that is your friend, I can tell you that by the way; I praise Heaven for it.

FENTON. — Shall I do any good, think'st thou? Shall I not lose my suit?

QUICKLY. — Troth, sir, all is in His hands above: but notwithstanding, Master Fenton, I'll be sworn on a book, she loves you. — Have not your worship a wart above your eye?

FENTON. — Yes, marry, have I; what of that?

QUICKLY. — Well, thereby hangs a tale. — Good faith, it is such another Nan; — but, I detest, an honest maid as ever broke bread: — we had an hour's talk of that wart. — I shall never laugh but in that maid's company; — but, indeed, she is given too much to allicholly and musing. But for you -- well, go to.

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act I. Sc. 4.



XIX.

Fenton and Mistress Quickly.

XX.

FALSTAFF.

FALSTAFF. — The Windsor bell hath struck twelve; the minute draws on. O, powerful love! that, in some respects, makes a beast a man, in some other, a man a beast. — You were also, Jupiter, a swan, for the love of Leda: — O, omnipotent love! how near the god drew to the complexion of a goose! — For me, I am here a Windsor stag; and the fattest, I think, i' th' forest. Who comes here? my doe?

Merry Wives of Windsor, Act V. Sc. 5.



XX.

Falstaff.



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